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SOME ATTITUDINAL FACTORS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING.

BY- FIKS, ALFRED I.

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AN EXPERIMENT INVOLVING 50 YOUNG MALE U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL UNDERGOING INTENSIVE TRAINING IN RUSSIAN WAS CONDUCTED TO MEASURE THEIR ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATIONS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING. THE TESTS GIVEN THEM WERE STRUCTURED IN TERMS OF SUCH ATTITUDES AS THEIR GENERAL INTEREST, PRAGMATISM (CAREER OR MATERIAL ADVANTAGE), XENOPHILIA (IDENTIFICATION WITH OTHER CULTURES), ATTRACTION TO THE PARTICULAR CULTURE, AND COURSE SATISFACTION. A SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION WAS FOUND TO EXIST BETWEEN LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTITUDES OF PRAGMATISM, XENOPHILIA, AND ATTRACTION TO THE CULTURE OF THE LANGUAGE STUDIED. THE SAME THREE VARIABLES WHEN USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH APTITUDE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SCORES WERE FOUND RELIABLE ENOUGH TO PREDICT SUCCESS IN THE COURSE. OF LESSER IMPORTANCE WERE INTEREST IN SUBJECT MATTER AND SATISFACTION WITH THE COURSE. AS THE STUDY PROGRESSED, DECLINES IN SATISFACTION, INTEREST, AND PRAGMATIC ATTITUDES WERE NOTED BY THE TEACHERS. (OC)

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Some Attitudinal Factors in Foreign Language Learning[1]

Alfred I. Fiks, Ph.D.
Human Resources Research Office
The George Washington University

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As part of a continuing research program on psychological aspects of foreign language learning, we have been carrying out a study of student motivation and attitudes in intensive language courses. Carroll (1961) delineates a model for learning a foreign language consisting of five complexly related elements: viz., (1) the quality of the teaching, (2) the time or opportunity given the student to learn, (3) the student's foreign language aptitude, (4) his general intelligence, and (5) his perseverance. The last is defined simply as the amount of time an individual is willing to apply himself to the learning task. Student motivation as such is not considered important enough to be included in the learning model."---As long as learners remain co-operative and engage in learning whether they want to or not, motivation differences will not make much difference in achievement." (p. 45) We question this statement and will present data from just such situations, i.e., where students, by virtue of the fact that they are in the military, must make themselves available for language learning X number of hours per week. Even within such a context, which, moreover, selects men on the basis of their foreign language aptitude, attitudinal-motivational variation is thought to be of importance to their attainment.

Concern with questions of motivation and student set for learning foreign languages is not new, the work of Lambert and his co-workers for example, going back some six years or more. The approach taken in the present study, however, differs somewhat from theirs in several respects.

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First, the nature of the students and the type of pedagogic milieu are quite different from that in the Lambert research. Our student population is comprised of young, male, U.S. military personnel studying languages in intensive courses of 30 class hours per week for periods of 34 to 47 weeks. Secondly, a major finding of the Lambert work involved dichotomizing students into either an "instrumental orientation" group (i.e. those studying a foreign language for pragmatic reasons involving material gain) or an "integrative orientation" group (who identify and want to communicate with the people using that language). The latter group was found to be more successful in language classes. In the current study, we were not prepared to assert that the dichotomy represents any psychological reality or that the categories are mutually exclusive. Accordingly, we attempted to measure separately attitudes of pragmatism (including some items based on the "instrumental orientation" scale), xenophilia (i.e. liking other cultures generally), attraction to the particular culture (akin to the "integrative orientation"), as well as general interest in the subject matter, and satisfaction with particular aspects and methods of the course. A questionnaire consisting of a total of 41 items was used for this purpose. Third, and equally important, student attitudes and motivation are here regarded both in their role as predictor and predicted variables.

In their first context, we investigated to what extent scores on the various attitude sub-scales at Time 1 (near the beginning of the course) were related to end of course measures of learning achievement. Of particular theoretical interest was whether the autism theory Mowrer (1960) has developed for a child's learning of his mother tongue can be supported with second language acquisition data. Basically, Mowrer holds that the sounds which the infant's

parents utter become conditioned stimuli due to the association of the sounds with the child's primary reinforcement. The child, then, initially learns to produce such sounds due to the fact that their secondary reinforcement properties generalize to the response-correlated self-stimulation (i.e. hearing himself) when the child himself utters them.

If this is the case for first language learning, it may be argued, by extension, as the Lambert group (1963) has, that the foreign language learner .... "must want to identify with members of other linguistic-cultural groups and be willing to take on very subtle aspects of their behavior...." (p. 115) in order to succeed at his studies. That is, if the foreign language has pleasant connotations for the student, he will be more likely to learn it than otherwise. Presumably, such a set can be tapped by questionnaire methods such as Lambert's "integrative" scale or our items dealing with attraction to the specific culture in question. We would hypothesize further that the student's affective reactions to the instructor (who is in almost all cases a native of the other country) as a person, may be causally related to the student's achievement if the instructor is analogous to the parent in first language learning.

Attraction to the specific foreign culture may be regarded as an attitudinal component of attraction to other cultures generally, a dimension labelled xenophilia in this research study. Covariation of the xenophilia dimension with student attainment is also examined.

Ultimately, we will have data on such questions from six different schools, for six different languages, viz., Chinese, French, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The total sample size will be about 370 students. At the moment, the early data we have are based on about 50 students studying Russian at one school and are very promising.

It appears from the data that some attitudes the students hold near the beginning of the course (even with the range restriction probably present as a result of some self-selection as well as preselection on aptitude) are reliably related to measures of attainment. The more a student perceives language training as a way to further his career as well as the more he identified with foreign cultures in general, the higher his achievement tends to be ($r = .28$, $p < .05$; $r = .39$, $p < .01$ respectively). Interest, as such, and satisfaction with the course, show no stable relationships with the criteria. Breaking the data in two, according to the degree of attraction the student has for the cultural group whose language he is studying shows that the tendencies are all in the hypothesized direction, i.e. the greater the attraction, the higher the later attainment. Such data are consistent with application of autistic learning theory to second language acquisition phenomena.

The same results may also contain some practical usefulness. Still regarding attitudes as predictor variables, i.e. as sets to foreign language attainment, they may be used in a student selection test battery at or near the beginning of the course. The costs involved in intensive language training are high and student space is limited. It would be valuable to be able to decrease the existing attrition rate and, further, screen out probable low achievers among those who complete the courses. Using aptitude and general intelligence as predictors, $R = .38$. When interest, pragmatism, and xenophilia are added, the correlation increases to .50. If, in addition, four factorially pure motivation dimensions (viz., "assertiveness," "pugnacity," "mating drive," and "home-parental sentiment") are added to the situation, R becomes .68. Applying a correction for shrinkage to R (to take account of the number of subjects, 52, and the number of predictor variables, 9) yields an unbiased estimate of the universe value of $R = .61$ ($p = .01$).

As predicted variable, a look at attitudes at Time 2 (i.e. near the end of the course) will afford some insight as to the effect that the training experience may have had on them. By including a control group of students at Time 2 (so as to eliminate questionnaire re-administration as a source of bias) we have been able to observe some trends in the data. The anecdotal report by teachers that student motivation, morale, and attitudes, drop as the course progresses is manifested in three of our scales viz., satisfaction with the pedagogic details of the course, interest in the subject matter, and pragmatic attitude. All three dimensions tend to show a decrease from Time 1 to Time 2. Xenophilia (a positive set toward other cultures) and attraction toward the particular society of the language being studied appears to remain stable or actually increase with exposure to the language course. From a practical viewpoint this may provide a psychological wedge with which to prevent a drop-off of student attitudes and student attrition.

In conclusion, the interplay between student attitudinal set and the language classroom should be viewed as a storehouse holding much knowledge which is of relevance to learning theory, social psychology, as well as foreign language pedagogy.

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